

Abstract ID : 466

Title : Possible granuloma associated with an internal tag deployed on a blue whale

Category : Conservation

Student : Not Applicable

Preferred Format : Poster Presentation

Abstract : Since 1990, several research projects using high tech internal tags have been conducted on blue whales from California and Baja California. While TDR and satellite tags have allowed us to understand some aspects of their ecology, the long term effects of tagging the whales has not been monitored. Here we describe one effect of such tagging, a growth associated with the tag attachment area on one blue whale, which highlights the need of monitoring tagged individuals. During the winter 2002, we photographed a blue whale with a prominent protuberance situated on the left flank between the head and dorsal fin showing a metallic object visible in its center. A year later, the protuberance was still visible on the same individual when photo-recaptured. We believe that this may be granulomatous tissue developed as a response to the internal metallic tag. Although the whale did not show signs of being negatively affected, the long term effect of this growth is unknown. We recommend that internal tagging methods be reviewed for potential deleterious effects and that photo-identification of whales should be performed before deploying any sort of tag.